

“Whereas, since it has become apparent that there is a disposition to intimidate the voting element of our race by discharging them from various places of employment in the event that they register to vote, and whereas it has come to the notice of us, the colored ladies—the laboring class—that certain of our men have refused to register because of the intimidation mentioned above, we have therefore resolved that every negro who refuses to register his name next Saturday that he may vote, we shall make it our business to deal with him in a way that will not be pleasant. He shall be branded a white livered coward who would sell his liberty and the liberty of our whole race to the demons who are even now seeking to take away the most sacred rights vouchsafed to any people. We are further resolved that we teach our daughters to recognize only those young men who have the courage and manhood to stand up for the liberty which under God he now has, be he ever so poor. We are farther resolved to lend our assistance in every way to perpetuate the liberties which we now enjoy, regardless of the insults and threats thrown out at us by those who seek to crush us. We have resolved to teach our children to love the party of manhood’s rights and liberties, trusting in God to restored order out of the present confusion. Be is resolved further that we have these resolutions published in our Daily Record, the one medium that has stood up for our rights when others have forsaken us. Respectfully submitted, An Organization of Colored Ladies.”

Wilmington *Messenger*, October 21, 1898

recognized the Democrats’ campaign “threatened their rights” as citizens. Democrats used the activism of black women to demonstrate another avenue in which white men had lost control under Fusion. Black women, once voiceless and helpless to resist white men in every realm, were now speaking out.²⁵

Final Maneuvers

Amid armed threats and heated rhetoric, the Republicans and Populists tried to find ways to assuage Democrats. At the center of these efforts for both Republicans and Democrats was Governor Daniel Russell. Both parties looked to him to alleviate tensions in the city. Late in October, Wilmington Democrats acknowledged that if the city’s Republicans were allowed to put African American candidates on the ballot, Democrats would lose those races. Therefore, a movement sought to prevent the Republicans from mounting a slate. After capitulation to Democrats in October, both William Chadbourn and Flavel Foster urged Republicans not to mount a county ticket,

thus allowing the Democrats to gain control of county government through election.²⁶

Still, local Democratic Party leader George Rountree claimed that the Republicans, under the leadership of George Z. French, planned to place nominees on the ballot despite threats of violence. Believing that intervention with Russell in Raleigh would alleviate the problem, he encouraged merchants E. K. Bryan, James Sprunt, and James H. Chadbourn to visit Russell. Sprunt, as representative of the businessmen, wrote to Russell on October 24 and explained that things were out of control in the city and entreated Russell to do what he could to prevent violence.²⁷

²⁶Fusionists throughout the state removed opposition candidates, particularly black ones, from the ballot in hopes of peace. The *Messenger* acknowledged the Republican sacrifice on November 5 with a short sentence: “The decision of the Republican managers to place no ticket in the field, making a Democratic county out of a county having a Republican majority of 750 was the last move they could make to prevent extreme measures.” *Wilmington Messenger*, November 5, 1898; McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 632; Haley, *Charles N. Hunter*, 110; Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics*, 145; Hunt, *Marion Butler*, 153.

²⁷ “We have been deeply concerned during the past week by the very excited state of our inhabitants in

²⁵ Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 107.